

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

106th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 193

July 1, 1999, 10:46 a.m.
Page S-7980 Temp. Record

SPENDING REFORM/Cloture, motion to proceed (Social Security Lockbox)

SUBJECT: A Bill to Provide Guidance for the Designation of Emergencies as a Part of the Budget Process. Nickles motion to close debate on the motion to proceed.

ACTION: CLOTURE MOTION AGREED TO, 99-1

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. 557, a Bill to Provide Guidance for the Designation of Emergencies as a Part of the Budget Process, will enact new procedures for designating proposed spending as emergency spending in order to limit abuses of that designation (if proposed new spending is classified as emergency spending and will cause the spending caps to be exceeded, only a simple majority vote is necessary to approve it; if it is not classified as emergency spending, then a three-fifths majority (60) vote point of order lies against it).

After a motion to invoke cloture on a pending Lott amendment to create budget rules that would protect Social Security surpluses from being spent on non-Social Security purposes (a "lockbox"; see vote No. 166), S. 557 was returned to the calendar. (The Lott amendment contained the text of the Abraham/Domenici/Ashcroft et al. lockbox proposal). On June 29, Senator Nickles, on behalf of Senator Lott, moved to proceed to S. 557 in order to resume consideration of the pending lockbox amendment. Senate Democrats indicated their intent to filibuster that motion. Senator Nickles, for himself and others, then moved to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed.

NOTE: a motion to invoke cloture requires a three-fifths majority (60) vote to succeed.

At the time of the vote amendments and motions were pending to the bill that filled all available parliamentary openings for offering amendments. The amendments and motions were structured so as to require a vote on the substance of the Abraham et al. lockbox proposal prior to the consideration of other proposals. Once that vote was held, regardless of whether the proposal was accepted or rejected, the bill would remain open to amendment on any subject, whether germane, relevant, or extraneous. The Abraham et al. amendment would create a Social Security "lockbox" (budget process protection) to preserve the \$1.8 trillion in Social Security surpluses that are expected to accrue in the next 10 years for Social Security. The lockbox would make it more

(See other side)

YEAS (99)				NAYS (1)		NOT VOTING (0)	
Republican (54 or 98%)		Democrats (45 or 100%)		Republicans (1 or 2%)	Democrats (0 or 0%)	Republicans (0)	Democrats (0)
Abraham	Helms	Akaka	Kennedy	Roth			
Allard	Hutchinson	Baucus	Kerrey				
Ashcroft	Hutchison	Bayh	Kerry				
Bennett	Inhofe	Biden	Kohl				
Bond	Jeffords	Bingaman	Landrieu				
Brownback	Kyl	Boxer	Lautenberg				
Bunning	Lott	Breaux	Leahy				
Burns	Lugar	Bryan	Levin				
Campbell	Mack	Byrd	Lieberman				
Chafee	McCain	Cleland	Lincoln				
Cochran	McConnell	Conrad	Mikulski				
Collins	Murkowski	Daschle	Moynihan				
Coverdell	Nickles	Dodd	Murray				
Craig	Roberts	Dorgan	Reed				
Crapo	Santorum	Durbin	Reid				
DeWine	Sessions	Edwards	Robb				
Domenici	Shelby	Feingold	Rockefeller				
Enzi	Smith, Bob	Feinstein	Sarbanes				
Fitzgerald	Smith, Gordon	Graham	Schumer				
Frist	Snowe	Harkin	Torricelli				
Gorton	Specter	Hollings	Wellstone				
Gramm	Stevens	Inouye	Wyden				
Grams	Thomas	Johnson					
Grassley	Thompson						
Gregg	Thurmond						
Hagel	Voinovich						
Hatch	Warner						

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

difficult to spend those surpluses on unrelated programs or on tax cuts. See vote No. 166 for details on the specific budget constraints that would be enacted under that proposal.

Those favoring the motion to invoke cloture contended:

Argument 1:

Senate Democrats began their filibuster of our efforts to create a Social Security lockbox on April 22. Since that date, \$22.2 billion of this year's Social Security surplus have been spent on purposes totally unrelated to Social Security. Our liberal colleagues love to talk about how much they support the idea of a lockbox and how much they really want to save the surpluses instead of spending them, and they talk about how they have often supported the idea in the past. However, when it comes time to vote and actually do what they say they support, they come up with excuses. Those excuses are wearing awfully thin. The House voted 416-12 in favor of a lockbox proposal, and President Clinton, who earlier this year came up with a budget plan to save 60 percent of the surpluses and to spend the rest (is 60 percent a passing grade?), has just in the last couple of days announced that he has decided that he supports creating a Social Security lockbox that will save 100 percent of the surpluses. Whether he got religion or just saw the writing on the wall does not matter--the President has endorsed a lockbox. Senate Democrats are pretty isolated--House Democrats have voted for a lockbox, and the President says he wants a lockbox. Will our Senate Democratic colleagues keep up their filibuster against protecting Social Security, now that they are standing alone?

In this debate, Senate Democrats have begun to say that they really like the idea of a lockbox and that the only reason they have opposed cloture in the past was that if cloture had been invoked they would have been blocked from offering amendments. That claim is false. Three of the votes were to close debate on a second-degree amendment--in other words, all we were trying to do was to get a vote on our proposal, after which the entire bill would have still been open to amendment. Any number of amendments on literally any subjects could have been proposed by Democrats, and Democrats could have conducted any number of additional filibusters they wished. Why are Democrats so afraid to vote on the Republicans' lockbox proposal? On the fourth cloture vote, cloture was on the bill that passed the House by an overwhelming and bipartisan vote of 416 to 12. Nearly every House Democrat strongly endorsed that bill, and, even if cloture had been invoked, Senate Democrats could still have offered amendments germane to the subject of Social Security; they would only have been blocked from offering amendments on unrelated subjects such as welfare or defense. That restriction would have been fair--Social Security is an important enough topic that we think that it is reasonable to ask Democrats to stay focused on it when it is the issue at hand.

A couple of days ago Senate Democrats objected to proceeding to the bill, which is why we were forced to file cloture on the motion to proceed. Senate Democrats were not even willing to consider whether Social Security should be protected with a lockbox of any sort. Then President Clinton announced he supported a lockbox, leaving them isolated. We now have been told that Senate Democrats will flip-flop and support the motion to proceed. We hope they are not just voting for cloture to give themselves political cover. We hope that they will finally let us get a vote on our proposal, and on the House proposal, and on other proposals to save the Social Security surplus. This issue should be resolved, not killed by a Democratic filibuster after they have given themselves a convenient cover vote to say that they really wanted to enact a lockbox.

Argument 2:

We support enacting a lockbox. We always have. Our only objection is that our Republican colleagues want to force us to vote on their proposal without first giving us an opportunity to offer amendments. Their proposal needs a lot of work, and we are not about to approve it as an all-or-nothing proposition. In particular, we would like to have the lockbox protect Medicare as well as Social Security. Some of our Republican colleagues have just begun to talk about the importance of protecting Social Security surpluses; we have been fighting that battle for years. In fact, some of us had to abandon our earlier support for a constitutional amendment to balance the budget because our Republican colleagues refused to allow us to include in that proposed amendment a provision to require Social Security surpluses to be saved for Social Security. We think the fact that we were ready to put Social Security in the Constitution proves our commitment. This argument is not over who is most supportive of protecting Social Security. Instead, it is over the process that will be used in deciding how to protect it, and it is over the right of Senate Democrats to be included in that process. We support moving to proceed to the bill, and we hope our Republican colleagues will not try to shut us out of the process again once we are back on the bill.

No arguments were expressed in opposition to final passage.